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Approved For Release 2005/06/07 : CIA-RDP80-00809A000500640228-6

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Poland

SUBJECT Reconstruction of Gdansk/Planning and Construction
Organizations/Wages/Living Conditions, etc

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DATE DISTR. 4 OCT 1954

NO. OF PAGES 3

NO. OF ENCLS.

SUPP. TO
REPORT NO.

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. "Reconstruction efforts in Poland are not equally distributed, as is known. Some areas have been left nearly as they were after World War II, with the exception of certain government and public buildings which have been reconstructed. Other sections have been rebuilt nearly completely, for propagandistic or economic reasons. Warsaw, of course, takes first place in reconstruction, but Gdansk obviously has been allotted a priority. The regime's reasons for reconstructing Gdansk seem to be both propagandistic and economic; 80% of the city was damaged during World War II, but it is now well on its way to being reinstated. The propaganda aim in reconstructing Gdansk is to restore its old character, erasing all traces of German (Prussian) domination, and emphasizing those traits which link Gdansk with old Poland. This part of the job is the architect's dream, and the old city is being raised from ruins with the greatest care. Many old Gdansk merchants' homes have been restored; they are as they were in the past, narrow two or three-story buildings, with steps leading up in front to a small terrace, where people used to gather in their leisure. All Polish Eagles, initials of Polish kings, crests of Polish nobility carved in stone which were removed by the Nazis, have been replaced. The Artushof (Dwor Artusa) is almost completely restored, as is Dlugi Street and the Church of Saint Mary (formerly called 'Marienkirche' in German), now officially called the 'Marine Cathedral'. (Many valuable pieces of art were looted from the church after World War II and sent to the USSR.)

Economic Aims

2. "The economic aspect of the Gdansk reconstruction, emphasizing local industry, particularly shipbuilding, is accentuated by the construction of living quarters for the working population in Gdansk, particularly for those engaged in shipyard and harbor works. The results of this development are not pleasing. The new blocks of modern workers' flats are purely utilitarian, ugly, uniform, like army barracks, and ruinous to the general appearance of

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the city. One of the largest of these colonies is being constructed in the Orumwaldzka and Roosevelt Streets area. It provides a typical case of 'Socialist building', which is architecturally terrible.

3. "All building projects in Gdansk are planned by a nationalized engineers' office, called 'Central Office of Projects of Municipal Building' (Centralne Biuro Projektow Budownictwa Miejskiego, or CBPBM). This office has many sections, or ateliers: architectural, sanitary, electrical, etc., as well as a vast administrative section (finance, planning, personnel, etc.). As in other nationalized enterprises, it employs an enormous number of people. I have heard that several hundreds are employed here, only some of whom are engaged in production, the rest being occupied with quantities of paper work. This office prepares plans which are then given to various State building enterprises, depending on the character of the job. There are separate organizations for the construction of residential houses and industrial buildings; and the industrial construction enterprise is subdivided according to light or heavy industry projects. In industrial construction jobs, the quality of work is dependent on the work brigades employed.
4. "Building workers are employed and paid according to a very complicated system of norms. Wages vary even within the same category of work, i.e., a mason makes less for laying a straight wall than for laying a wall with a window, door, corner, etc. The building industry has a long list of jobs for which different norms and wages apply. A building worker once told me that he never knew exactly how much he would make or why. He was a patient of mine and told me some of the work conditions in his trade: there are seven categories of wages among building workers, according to the degree of skill they possess. The highest numbered category is the best paid - up to 1000 to 1200 zlotys per month. The middle categories, to which most workers belong, bring in approximately 700 zlotys per month, the lowest ones earning 300 to 400 zlotys per month. Among these lowest brackets are mostly women employed in the trade. Wage differentials exist also in construction foundation works, such as digging, etc. In this case wages are gauged by the quality of soil being worked; there are four or five categories of soil, and work on those the easiest to dig brings in less pay than work on the others.
5. "The use of women in construction work has been highly propagandized in terms of the final equality of opportunity between the sexes. Propaganda also states that women are a tremendous success in building. This, of course, is not true. Physically, women cannot cope with construction jobs. Building brigades operate in teams, and most often a woman on the team slows production. A bricklayer cannot receive bricks fast enough from a woman passing them, and a woman pushing a wheelbarrow of bricks (a job often given to women) cannot manage without delays or assistance. The introduction of women into building is productively unnecessary and disadvantageous to the women physically. Sometimes, however, women are assigned to lighter jobs, such as taking charge of the tool shop, etc. In such a case, the wage level is approximately 500 zlotys per month.
6. "Apart from the renovation of the old city and new workers' quarters, much energy is being applied to the improvement of the Gdansk harbor and renovation and development of the shipyards. A special office for ship construction designs located at Ulica Janka Z Kolna in Gdansk provides the blueprints for the Gdansk shipyard. (There is also a separate office which draws plans for Polish naval vessels, but this is located somewhere else and is shrouded in secrecy.) The design office is managed by the Central Board of Shipping Industry (Centralny Zarzad Przemyslu Okretowego), which also manages the shipyards and runs the Polish 'Ships Register'.

Shipbuilding Engineers Training

7. "Youths wishing to become shipbuilding engineers are trained at the Shipbuilding Faculty of the Gdansk Polytechnic School. The first few years of the school saw an enormous influx of students who were interested both in the study of shipbuilding and in the practical aspect of the course: a cruise on a sea-going ship, which gave the students a chance to see the West (and

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provided a few with the opportunity to escape). These sea-going trips were discontinued in 1951, and enrollment in the Polytechnic school since then has been lower. After World War II, the scientific and other levels of Gdansk Polytechnic were very low. The authorities took pains to improve the situation which grew from the practice of accepting for study youths of 'proletarian origin', some of whom had had no proper secondary education. These youths were given a one-year course designed to fill in the academic gaps and were then given the entrance examination. Professors were obliged to pass a certain percentage of the applicants regardless of their qualifications; this was difficult for the professors to accept. Even some men of about 40 were admitted to Polytechnic even though they had been out of school so long that they no longer knew how to study problems, etc. Most of the students were unable to complete Polytechnic courses satisfactorily, and gave it up; but, in the meantime, they had barred the entrance of other brighter youths who, by the unfortunate luck of their social origin, were not admitted. The regime recognized its blunder in lowering the standards and saw the threat to industry that such a thing presented; but it could not admit its error, so simply started taking only the youngest candidates, who had at least started secondary school. Of these, even less than half eventually pass entrance examinations. The attitude of Polytechnic students is like the attitude of students in other Polish universities, resentful and bitter about the regime; but this is kept quiet: a student knows that he might spoil his chances for the future by voicing political opinions.

Anti-regime Factions

8. "In Gdansk of all the classes, it is the workers class which is the most violent in its anti-regime feelings. Just after World War II, the living conditions of these people were incredibly poor; even now there are sections of Gdansk (such as the 'Marvik' quarter) where workers live in half-ruined houses or primitive barracks in indescribable squalor. In such sections it is dangerous for a militia man alone to wander in the evening, especially on payday when the people have had something to drink (the sale of vodka on Saturdays is strictly forbidden, but a man who knows his way around can get some easily enough). From time to time one hears of a militia man who was murdered but this is, of course, never published. The construction of the blocks of new flats for workers will undoubtedly help the situation except that the single young men, who are often the source of trouble, will be the last to be allotted new apartments, because so many families need them."

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